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SHOPPERS DRUG MART
SEE WHAT'S NEW... CHECK OUT OUR LATEST OFFER ON PAGE 42

Vancouver's monster industry

City touts its growing reputation in animation field PAGE 4

BIG KISS-OFF CONFIRMED

IT'S OFFICIALLY SPLITSVILLE FOR JOHNNY DEPP AND VANESSA PARADIS PAGE 42

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Rising river, rising concern

Hanging tough.
Residents unfazed as levels in the Fraser River continue to rise

Langley residents living along unprotected banks of the Fraser River were securing cherished possessions as an evacuation alert in the township was added to several provincial communities preparing for potential flooding.

Emergency management co-ordinators warned Wednesday that water levels were expected to rise rapidly within the next 24 to 36 hours, resulting from a shot of warm weather through Friday that would melt snowpacks, followed by heavy rains.

The Fraser River from Prince George south through the Lower Mainland, as well as the Shuswap and Thompson rivers, appeared to be most threatened.

"I feel it's not going to be as bad as they think it's going to be," said Bill Cunningham, who lives about 150 metres from the Fraser River in Langley. "We're slowly getting ready to move whatever."

The 77-year-old said he's lived in the neighbourhood all his life and has experienced similar flood concerns about once a decade. The worst he recalls was in 1948.

"We might have to move out because it'll be a little difficult getting in and out because of water," he said, before getting in his car with his wife to go stay at his daughter's home. "But I don't think it'll even be that bad."

Cunningham lives among 147 homes in an unprotected swath of land that also snakes through farm properties and industrial businesses, which could also be at risk. The rest of the region is not vulnerable to flooding thanks to hefty dikes.

Mandeep Saran received a knock on her door in the early afternoon from a search-and-rescue worker who was canvassing the neighbourhood to inform residents of the alert.

She was asked about the six members of her family and told that if the river does rise, authorities might shut down road access.

"We're not too worried," said 29-year-old Saran, noting her family would decide later in the day if they would leave. "It can come, we are trying to collect our important documents."

THE CANADIAN PRESS

People are seen sandbagging on the Katzie First Nation along the banks of the Fraser River in North Langley on Wednesday. JONATHAN HAYWARD/THE CANADIAN PRESS

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Standoff

Nanaimo landlord held hostage at gunpoint

A 53-year-old man has been arrested in Nanaimo for allegedly pointing a gun at his landlord and threatening him.

RCMP constable Gary O'Brien said the landlord — who is in a wheelchair — was taken hostage at a trailer park at about 2 a.m. on Wednesday.

He said the victim managed to escape about two hours later when the suspect fell asleep, and he called 911.

O'Brien said hostage negotiators made contact with the suspect at about 9 a.m., when he walked out of his trailer and surrendered.

THE CANADIAN PRESS

Stanley Cup melee

Surrey man pleads guilty to riot-related crimes

A Surrey man has pleaded guilty to crimes that took place just after last year's Stanley Cup riot.

Duncan Yee, 20, was never charged with participating in a riot but has now entered guilty pleas for break-and-enter and disguise with intent for what he did in the hours after the riot.

Of 114 people charged so far with crimes connected to the riot, 25 have pleaded guilty.

Rioters looted stores, smashed windows and burned cars after the Canucks lost to the Boston Bruins in Game 7 of the 2011 Stanley Cup final. CKNW

Teachers' federation president Susan Lambert and other BCTF staff and teachers rally at the south end of the Cambie Bridge on Wednesday. "We've put a lot of resources and energy into a fruitless series of negotiations — 78 sessions at the bargaining table," Lambert said. PHYLICIA TORREVILLAS/METRO

Teachers mark one year without contract

Collective bargaining. Eleventh-hour effort to reach a settlement started on Wednesday

PHYLICIA TORREVILLAS
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B.C.'s public-school teachers marked one year without a contract with a series of rallies and demonstrations around the province on Wednesday.

"We've been working at this for a long time," said Susan Lambert, president of the British Columbia Teachers' Federation (BCTF). "We've put a lot of resources and energy into a fruitless series of negotiations — 78 sessions at the bargaining table."

But she said she's optimistic as the three-day negotiations between government-appointed mediator Dr. Charles Jago — who faces a June 30 deadline to produce non-binding recommendations — and the B.C. Public School Employers' Association got underway Wednesday morning in a final attempt to reach an agreement.

On her lunch break, Lambert stood along with 20 other BCTF staff and teachers at the south end of the Cambie Bridge, holding signs reading "Bill 22 only makes things worse" and "Negotiate, don't legislate."

Meanwhile, Vancouver teachers held demonstrations at three busy intersections in the city.

Lambert said she cannot predict the outcome of the bargaining, but major issues such as rising class sizes and the lack of support for students with special needs are still not being addressed.

"It will take a signed, respectful agreement at the table for this round of bargaining to end," she said. "A legislative intervention would be the worst-case scenario."

Follow Phylicia Torrevillas on Twitter @ptorrevillas

1 NEWS

On the web

It makes him wanna shout

One crazy fan took his love of fame (and video bombing) to a whole new level when he rudely interrupted Webb Simpson's interview after his 2012 U.S. Open win. Go to metronews.ca to watch the now-infamous screech.

Mobile news

A new survey of young Canadians suggests many believe there are benefits to giving their credit cards an active workout, but they may be overlooking some of the consequences when it's time to pay up. Scan the code to read the story.

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Consumer rights. Cash Store accused of violating B.C. payday-lending laws

Consumer Protection BC says Cash Store Financial Inc. has been ordered to pay $6,200 in administrative penalties for violating the province's payday-lending laws.

The not-for-profit organization, created by the provincial government to administer B.C.'s consumer-protection laws, said Wednesday that it has found 30 violations involving three separate regulations.

Edmonton-based Cash Store Financial Inc., a short-term lender operating under The Cash Store and Instaloans banners, has 30 days to appeal the decision.

The allegations include failing to include licence numbers in representation and visual advertisements; failing to include the expiry dates for issued cash cards in loan agreements; and requesting or requiring a payment from a borrower before it is due under the loan agreement

"We are committed to enforcing the law and ensuring that consumers are aware of their rights," said Manjit Bains, vice-president of corporate relations for Consumer Protection BC. THE CANADIAN PRESS

Home alone. Teen uses iPod to get help during break-in

Some high-tech hocus pocus helped a quick-thinking teen in Kelowna call for help without ever making a sound.

The 14-year-old was home alone on Tuesday morning when a trio of thieves broke in as he was getting ready for school.

RCMP say the youth grabbed his iPod and retreated into a closet as the robbers went through the house.

Investigators say the teen couldn't call for help, but he could text, so he fired off a message to a friend and described the danger.

The friend called the boy's grandfather, who raced to the home, arriving just ahead of police and catching one of the three crooks red handed.

The young victim was released from his hiding place and Mounties are now searching for two other men involved in the break-in.

THE CANADIAN PRESS

Parks and rec

Victoria wants dogs on leashes on the waterfront

The City of Victoria hopes it can get more residents to follow dog-leash rules along a section of waterfront. Currently, there's an off-leash area for dogs along a section of Dallas Road, an on-leash zone in the rest of Beacon Hill Park, and a no-dogs area in the Ross Bay Cemetery.

David Speed of the city's park department says an animal-enforcement contractor will work more hours, especially in the evenings and on weekends, and will focus on education — not necessarily tickets.

VICTORIA TIMES COLONIST

Choppy water

3 kayakers rescued by Cormorant

A sudden wave, a flipped kayak and the unforgiving rocks of Vancouver Island's west coast nearly spelled disaster for three men. Fortunately, a sharp-eyed boater alerted officials yesterday afternoon when he spotted the trio's predicament near Estevan Point, northwest of Tofino. Within an hour, a Cormorant helicopter from 19 Wing Comox had arrived to help.

Rescuers say the men were well equipped for their expedition but ran into trouble when one of the kayaks rolled in choppy water. THE CANADIAN PRESS

Pixar Canada general manager Amir Nasrabadi, left, Mike from Monsters, Inc., centre, and Vancouver Mayor Gregor Robertson share a laugh at Pixar's Gastown studios Wednesday. KATE WEBB/METRO

A peek inside the visual FX industry

Booming business. Estimates suggest over two-thirds of digital-media hires are locals

KATE WEBB
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Vancouver's reputation as Hollywood North is nothing new, but the mayor wants people to know the city is now also a world-class hub for visual effects and animation, third in scale only to London and L.A.

Gregor Robertson took media on a tour of three of B.C.'s fastest-growing studios Wednesday to showcase the cutting-edge creative work taking place in 22,000 darkened cubicles hidden around the city.

"This industry has been off the radar, because it's not the traditional resource-based industry that built Vancouver. But today it's larger than those industries and growing rapidly, so we need to make a bigger deal of it and call attention to our success and our desire to keep growing," he said outside Pixar's 30,000-square-foot office in Gastown.

Lee Malleau, CEO of the Vancouver Economic Commission, said Vancouver is an irresistible destination for studios looking to expand or relocate thanks to its lifestyle, tax incentives, large pool of talent, feeder schools, and proximity to L.A.

Image Engine Studio on West 5th Avenue, for example, has grown from a company of 30 to 250 in the last six years, and is currently working on the sequel to District 9, which earned it an Oscar nomination for digital effects in 2010.

London-based film-production giant MPC, which conjured up the special effects in the blockbuster Harry Potter movies, opened offices in Yaletown in 2007 with 35 people, and has since hired 165 more.

Many studios have no choice but to recruit top talent internationally, and they leverage Vancouver's natural allure to do so. But estimates suggest well over two-thirds of digital-media hires are locals, and the province provides a 17.5 per cent tax credit on B.C. labour to further incentivize domestic job creation in animation, visual effects and video-game development.

By the numbers

13,000
B.C. has more than 1,300 digital-media companies, employing 22,000 people.

$3B
The industry is worth $3 billion annually.

12
12 studios have relocated to Vancouver from L.A. in the last four years.

10%
The industry is expected to grow another 10 per cent in the next five years.

Suspect Jeffrey Greenwood

- Jeffrey Greenwood, 27, left, is still wanted in connection with several violent pawn-shop and jewelry-store robberies.
- He has a distinctive tattoo of a pitbull on his neck.
- He is six feet, has blue eyes and weighs 166 pounds. Source: RCMP

Eight charged in violent jewelry heists

One of eight suspects remains at large after several violent robberies in which hammers, machetes and lighter fluid were used to terrorize pawn-shop and jewelry-store employees.

The group allegedly made off with more than $80,000 in jewelry and luxury goods from robberies committed in north Surrey and Burnaby between May 22 and June 5.

"This was an organized goal-oriented group that had no regard for public safety and displayed reckless behaviour putting innocent people's lives at risk," RCMP Insp. Wade Lymburger said in a statement.

One pawn-shop worker was allegedly punched in the face and another doused with lighter fluid, said Sgt. Drew Grainger, RCMP spokesman.

Police identified a vehicle following the Surrey robberies. They used surveillance teams to follow the thieves to the third robbery at Station Jewellers in Burnaby on June 5, where they witnessed a "very brazen, sudden and unexpected robbery," Grainger said.

"The group split up, there were eight in total. Half of them went back to Surrey and the other half were arrested in New Westminster at the Columbia SkyTrain station with the assistance of the Burnaby Strike Force," he said.

Police seized $30,000 in stolen merchandise and were able to recommend charges against Jordan Boucher, Kevin Campbell, Raymond Hawse, Anthony Nguyen, Sonny Nguyen, Bobby Prasad and a woman, Phuong Thi Le.

DANIEL PALMER/FOR METRO

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Year 3. Police seek fresh info in missing-teen case

It has been three long years for the family, friends and police officers seeking closure in the suspicious disappearance of 17-year-old Jodi Henrickson from a Bowen Island house party.

To mark the June 20, 2009, anniversary, police and Crime Stoppers are launching a renewed poster and online campaign to ask for public assistance in solving the case.

Henrickson was last seen on the morning of June 20, 2009, around 6 a.m. wearing a black leather jacket, black longsleeve shirt and blue jeans.

Anyone with information is urged to call the IHIT tip line at 1-877-551-4448 or Crime Stoppers at 1-800-222-8477.

Jodi Henrickson disappeared on Bowen Island three years ago. FACEBOOK.COM

DANIEL PALMER/METRO

Floods. Officials ponder closing Kamloops parks

Kamloops officials are considering closing city parks after the South Thompson River climbed again overnight, one of several rivers to rise in the B.C. Interior as emergency providers keep watch over flood concerns.

Public Works director David Duckworth says a riverside parking lot has already been closed off for public safety, while homeowners in several low-lying areas are being urged to sandbag their properties.

The River Forecast Centre is expecting another surge of up to 15 centimetres later today or early tomorrow in the Shuswap River at Enderby, along with rises from 20 to 60 centimetres in Shuswap Lake at Salmon Arm over the next week.

Shuswap emergency coordinator Cliff Doherty says Shuswap Lake may crest within about three days, approaching levels last seen in 1999.

Doherty says more than 10,000 sandbags have already been distributed to area residents, among the 700,000 in use for flood purposes around the province.

THE CANADIAN PRESS

Possible foul play

Woman found dead in Okanagan

An autopsy will be needed to determine what caused the death of a woman found floating in Okanagan Lake. A passerby spotted the body in the water off Kelowna early Tuesday morning and called police.

RCMP say they have an idea how the victim died, but foul play is a possibility. CKQQ/CKFR

Investigation

Forklift driver injured in accident

A forklift driver at a Barriere sawmill has been injured in an industrial accident. The general manager of the Gilbert Smith sawmill says the man was hurt when a load of lumber toppled, pinning him between two loads. Greg Smith says the man is now recovering from serious leg and elbow injuries. CHNL

Lt. Bob Dubbert, with the Vancouver Fire Department, shows how a fire can quickly spread to the side of a house or garage if residents leave flammable materials such as mattresses or couches unattended. PHYLICIA TORREVILLAS/METRO

Vancouver police warn of summer arson fires

Crime of opportunity. Officials remind public to be vigilant after three arson fires were set this week

PHYLICIA TORREVILLAS
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Vancouver police and fire officials are urging the public to be vigilant to prevent a "crime of opportunity" that often comes with dry and warm weather.

They put the word out to residents to keep their yards and laneways tidy and to report any suspicious activity or people.

This warning comes after three arson fires were set Tuesday night and early Wednesday morning on Vancouver's West Side.

Two dumpsters were set on fire Tuesday at around 10:50 p.m. in the south alley of West Broadway and Balaclava Street. A porta-potty was then set ablaze at 19th Avenue and Highbury Street. The third fire happened at 4:30 a.m. Wednesday after an older-model vehicle was torched at 5th Avenue and Highbury Street.

Roder said summer police and fire crews will be doing sidewalk safety checks in neighbourhoods to look for dangerous items in backyards that could be deliberately set on fire such as discarded mattresses, old sofas and dried garden trimmings.

Fire crews will also be handing out safety check cards to residents if they see potentially hazardous items outside their homes. In 2011, Roder said the fire department attended to 151 deliberately set fires, which accounted for almost $7 million in property loss.

VPD spokesperson Const. Brian Montague said between June and November 2011, there were 24 fires on the West Side and charges have been laid in two of those cases.

Quoted

"We'd rather have a patrol down checking something (suspicious) rather than have a fire truck down to put a fire out."

Capt. Gabe Roder with the Vancouver Fire Department

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TML:USW2009:LEU#35

Summertime and the jazz festival is an easy choice

Music. 27th edition of event will see the free opening weekend move from Gastown to Robson Square

KATE WEBB
kate.webb@metronews.ca

It's one of Vancouver's most iconic and celebrated signs of summer, and like those elusive rays of sunshine, the 27th annual TD Vancouver International Jazz Festival is finally here.

For the next 10 days the stages of Vancouver will sizzle with the sultry sounds of jazz greats like "supafunkrocker" Trombone Shorty, 10-time Grammy Award-winning George Benson, and R&B/soul sensation Janelle Monáe.

Festival spokesman John Orysik explained moving the free opening weekend from Gastown to Robson Square and the Vancouver Art Gallery (VAG) grounds this year made room for three stages instead of two in the heart of the city.

"We're really excited about animating and energizing downtown Vancouver with great music and a lot of exciting components that will be part of the downtown jazz weekend on the opening weekend," Orysik said.

The free downtown jazz weekend runs from noon until 9 p.m. Saturday and Sunday, and includes interactive art installations, artisan and food markets, a kids' zone, and two licensed outdoor bistros.

The sheer size of the event, Vancouver's largest annual music festival, is staggering.

Featuring more than 300 performances by 1,800 artists in 35 indoor and outdoor venues, it is expected to attract half a million people between June 22 and July 1.

"The whole city is getting dressed up for the jazz festival and getting ready to really party down," Orysik said.

Many revelers will be from out of town, and the whole shebang is expected to pump $35 million into the local economy.

Orysik said about half of the 300 performances are free, and the concerts that require tickets or passes will showcase some of the top talent in the world.

Free shows all over the city begin at noon Friday. For the complete schedule of events and tickets visit coastaljazz.ca.

Follow Kate Webb on Twitter @MetroK8

Musicians

1,800

The number of artists expected for more than 300 performances during the festival. The event is expected to attract half a million people.

R&B/soul sensation Janelle Monáe plays the Centre for Performing Arts as part of the Jazz Festival June 29.
JEFF CHRISTENSEN/THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

App lets First Nations chat in their native tongues

Four decades ago, Pena Elliott's grandfather sat down with a typewriter and created the written form of the native language spoken in his First Nations community on Vancouver Island.

The standard 26-letter Roman alphabet couldn't account for all of the intricate sounds of the language, so he created new characters by overlapping letters and punctuation.

"Our language would never be in the place that it was if it wasn't for that alphabet," adds Elliott, 33, a language apprentice at the local tribal school in Brentwood Bay, B.C.

The new alphabet worked for generations, but computers and smartphones that don't support such languages have created a barrier for aboriginals, particularly youth, who want to combine their ancestral dialects with the latest technology. But an iPhone and iPad app released this week called FirstVoices aims to bridge that gap, allowing users to chat using their native language for the first time.

The app, created by the British Columbia-based First Peoples' Cultural Council, features nearly 100 customized keyboards that display the characters used by a wide variety of native languages. The app also supports indigenous languages from the United States, Australia and New Zealand.

THE CANADIAN PRESS

Quoted

"This new chat (software) is going to help our more fluent speakers a lot."
Pena Elliott

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Terror in Toulouse — again

Hostages saved. French police storm bank in city where seven people were killed by terrorist gunman in March

A hostage-taking Wednesday left the French city of Toulouse traumatized for the second time in three months.

Police stormed a bank and captured a gunman who took four of its employees hostage.

Tensions have been high in Toulouse since March, when a gunman who claimed links to the al-Qaida terror network killed three Jewish schoolchildren, a rabbi and three paratroopers.

That was France's worst terrorist attack in years, and led to a crackdown on suspected Islamist radicals around France.

This time, officials waved off reports the latest suspect had ties to al-Qaida, saying he had psychiatric problems.

Prosecutor Michel Valet said the gun, used twice during the six-hour ordeal, fired only rubber bullets, and the gunman had no police record.

The hostages were released unharmed, while the suspect was hospitalized with two bullet wounds in the left hand and left thigh.

Among those moved to safety in the area were four- and five-year-old children from a private language school next to the bank.

The Prefect of the Haute-Garonne region, Henri-Michel Comet, said 150 police were mobilized, 30 of them from the elite GIPN squad.

Valet said during negotiations that the gunman wanted to advertise the religious motivation behind his act.

"The hostage-taker wants us to make it known that he is acting not for money, and that his motivations come from his religious conviction," Valet said.

He did not say what faith the gunman adheres to.

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

City in fear

"I'm worried about the climate that reigns in this city."

Fearful Doriane Clermont, 23, who lives with her three-year-old son across the street from the bank.

Police secure the area after a gunman took four people hostage in a Toulouse bank Wednesday. BRUNO MARTIN/THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Court ready to debate the state of Breivik's brain

Sane or insane? Anders Behring Breivik, left, is watched by two psychiatrists during his mass-murder trial. HEIKO JUNGE/THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Do prosecutors think confessed mass killer Anders Behring Breivik is insane or not?

They're not saying — for now.

But "the decision has been made," prosecutor Svein Holden told reporters in Norway on Wednesday.

Closing arguments begin Thursday in a trial that has captivated Norway since the middle of April.

Ultimately, judges will decide Breivik's mental state when they hand down a verdict in July or August.

Breivik, a self-described anti-Muslim militant, has admitted he carried out the bombing and shooting rampage that left 77 people dead in July, so guilt is not an issue.

The main issue is whether to send the 33-year-old Norwegian to a prison or a mental institution.

Weeks of fractious testimony from mental-health experts suggest it's a complicated decision — and Breivik's behaviour in court has not made it any easier.

At the end of Wednesday's Oslo hearing, Breivik complained not enough attention was given to his suffering at seeing Norway become a multicultural society.

"This case is about Norway's future, and Europe's future, and these were themes they should have addressed," he said.

He added it was "a traumatic experience ... to be stigmatized as a narrow-minded Islamophobe and a right-wing extremist."

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Pivotal week

Prosecutors will present their views on Breivik's mental state on Thursday. The defence will get its chance Friday.

- **Panel.** The five judges have at least a month to deliberate before delivering a verdict.
- **Jail.** If found sane, Breivik faces a 21-year term.

Pilot's friend?

French man with 9-11 tie arrested in Pakistan

Pakistan has arrested a French man reportedly linked to one of the masterminds of the Sept. 11 terrorist attack.

Naamen Meziche was captured in a raid in the Baluchistan region near the border with Iran, officials said.

Reports say Meziche was a friend of Mohammed Atta, who piloted American Airlines Flight 11 into the World Trade Center. THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Chicago summit

Three accused of planning attack on Obama HQ

Three NATO summit protesters face four terrorism-related counts after being accused of planning to attack U.S. President Barack Obama's campaign headquarters in Chicago with Molotov cocktails.

The charges were revealed by defence attorneys. Brian Church, 20, Jared Chase, 24, and Brent Vincent Betterly, 24, were arrested before the summit in Chicago.

State's attorneys had said they would only disclose the indictment at the arraignment.

But defence attorneys obtained the indictment this week from the Cook County Circuit Court clerk's office, said Sarah Gelsomino, one of Church's attorneys.

"This is highly unusual behaviour that, at every stage, prosecutors have refused to talk to us," she said Wednesday.

"It is symbolic that we couldn't even get the indictment directly from prosecutors themselves."

Defence attorneys have said all three men intend to enter not-guilty pleas at their July 2 arraignment.

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

LeRoy Neiman

Artist sketched top sports events in an instant

Painter and sketch artist LeRoy Neiman, who captured the energy of the world's biggest sporting events with bright quick strokes, died Wednesday at age 91.

In 1972, he sketched the world chess tournament between Boris Spassky and Bobby Fischer for a live television audience.

He also produced live drawings of the Olympics for TV.

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Civilians killed

U.S. dodging drone questions, UN official says

A United Nations human-rights expert accused the U.S. government Wednesday of sidestepping his questions on its use of armed drones to carry out targeted killings overseas.

Christof Heyns, the UN's independent investigator on extrajudicial killings, had asked the United States to lay out the legal basis and accountability procedures for the use of armed drones.

He also wanted the U.S. to publish figures on the number of civilians killed in drone strikes against suspected terror leaders in Afghanistan, Pakistan, Yemen and elsewhere.

Heyns said in Geneva on Wednesday he was still waiting for a satisfactory reply.

"I don't think we have the full answer to the legal framework; we certainly don't have the answer to the accountability issues," he told reporters.

The U.S. use of armed drones has provoked anger abroad, particularly in Pakistan, where human-rights groups say innocent people have been among the victims of the strikes.

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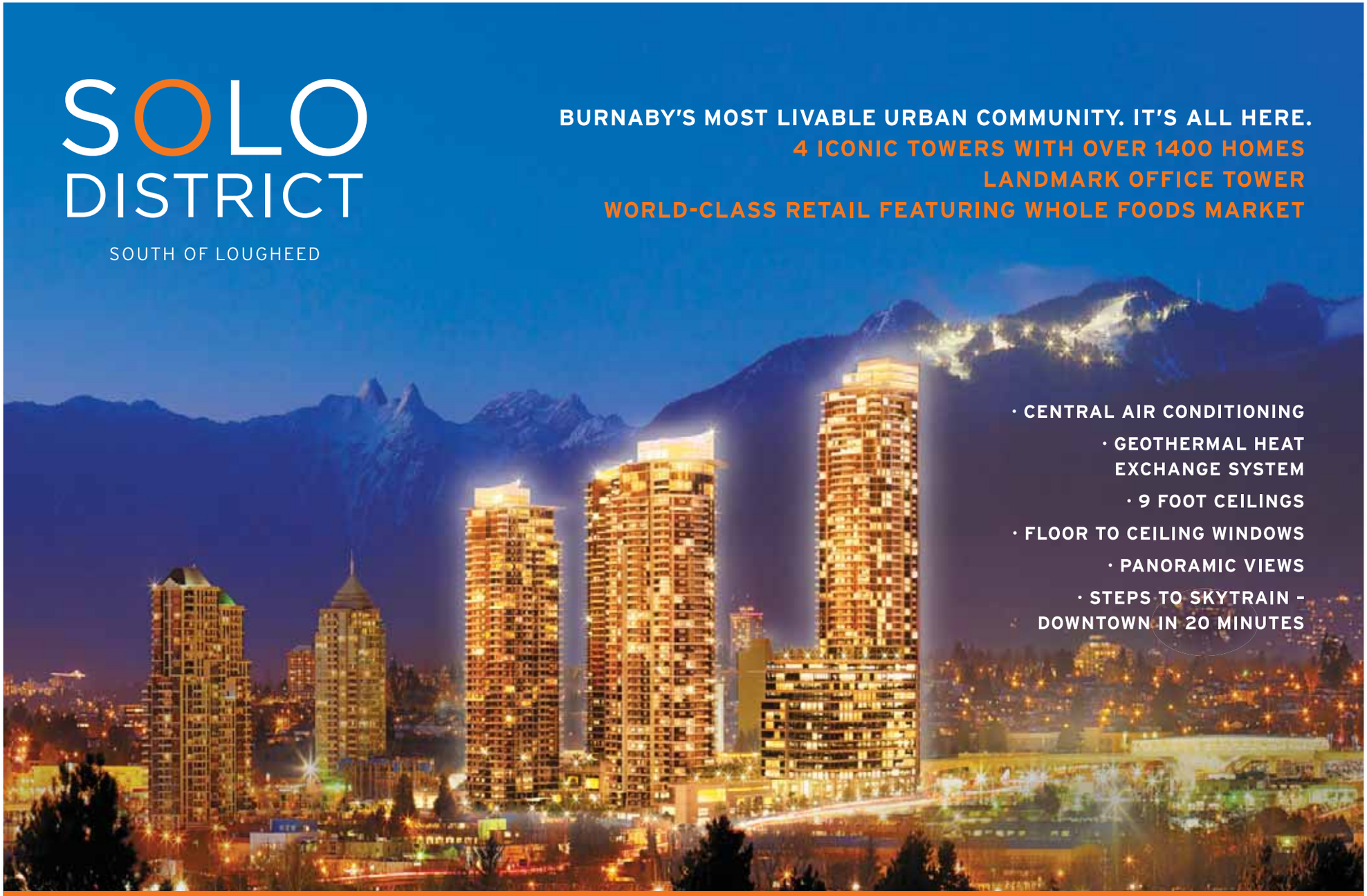

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Pentagon. Anti-Islamic rhetoric blamed on bad judgment, poor oversight

Poor judgment and poor oversight led to the teaching of anti-Islamic material at a U.S. military school for officers, the Pentagon said Wednesday.

Some of the material suggested the U.S. ultimately might have to obliterate the Islamic holy cities of Mecca and Medina in Saudi Arabia without regard for civilian deaths.

Materials in a course for military officers at Joint Forces Staff College in Virginia portrayed the U.S. as at war with Islam. U.S. officials repeatedly say the war is against terrorists.

An Army lieutenant colonel who taught the class has been relieved of his teaching duties, but investigators recommended reviewing the actions of two civilian officials at the school to see if they also should face discipline, the Defence Department said in a statement. A second military officer will receive counselling.

The teacher, Lt. Col. Matthew Dooley, had suggested that the Geneva Convention, which guides behaviour toward prisoners, was "no longer relevant" and that Muslims "hate everything you stand for."

The Pentagon suspended the course in late April when a student objected. The FBI also changed some agent training last year after discovering that its curriculum, too, was critical of Islam.

The new findings come from a report sought by the chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, Gen. Martin Dempsey.

He had ordered all service branches to review their training to ensure that other courses don't use anti-Islamic material.

The report itself has not been released, but the conclusions were described by Dempsey's spokesman, Marine Col. Dave Lapan, in a written statement to the media and in a conversation with reporters.

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Pollution rife in Rio+20 host city

Eco issues. Attendees of the UN conference will witness a city struggling with sustainability

A child ties his raft to a tree by the polluted Jacarepagua lake, near the conference centre where the Rio+20 conference is taking place in Rio de Janeiro. VICTOR R. CAIVANO/THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

The throngs streaming into Rio for a sustainable development conference may be dreaming of white-sand beaches and clear, blue waters, but what they are first likely to notice as they leave the airport is not the salty tang of ocean in the breeze, but the stench of raw sewage.

That's because the airport sits by a bay that absorbs about 1.2 billion litres of raw wastewater a day: 480 Olympic swimming pools worth of filth.

The United Nations Environment Program warned this month that the planet's environmental systems "are being pushed towards their biophysical limits," and for the 50,000 visitors from 190 countries streaming in for the UN Conference on Sustainable Development, the welcome here is a rank reminder of just how hard it will be to balance economic growth and environmental protection elsewhere across the globe.

"Rio, the host city, has a range of urban problems: air and water pollution, social exclusion, water supply," said Carlos Bocuhy, who heads the Brazilian Institute of Environmental Protection. "We are facing the possibility of collapse if we don't change course."

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This is progress?

Earth stats, then and now

Since world leaders last gathered in Rio de Janeiro to talk about the state of the Earth in 1992, much has changed:

Temperatures: The average annual global temperature has increased 0.32 degrees Celsius since 1992 based on 10-year running averages, according to the U.S. National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration.

Pollution: Global levels of the chief heat-trapping gas, carbon dioxide, climbed 10 per cent from nearly 358 parts per million in April 1992 to 394 ppm this past April, NOAA said.

Disasters: Since 1992, natural disasters have affected 4.4 billion people worldwide, killed 1.3 million people, and cost $2 trillion in damages, according to the United Nations.

Forests: Since 1990, the world's primary forest areas have decreased by about 300 million hectares, according to the UN.

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Problems still exist, Japan's nuclear utility admits

A demonstrator holds a sign during an anti-nuclear rally in Tokyo on Saturday. ITSUO INOUYE/THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

The operator of the Japanese nuclear plant devastated by last year's tsunami issued a final report on the disaster Wednesday, outlining organizational and communication problems that have not yet been resolved.

The report by Tokyo Electric Power Co. comes as Japan prepares to restart its first nuclear reactors since the March 11, 2011, disaster led to a prolonged shutdown of all of the country's atomic generating plants.

While many Japanese remain deeply concerned about the safety of nuclear power, the restart raises operators' hopes that more reactors can resume operations.

The massive tsunami severely damaged four reactors at the Fukushima Daiichi nuclear plant north of Tokyo, knocking out cooling systems and triggering meltdowns and radiation leaks. Tens of thousands of people fled their homes in the worst atomic disaster since Chornobyl.

Officials say the plant has since stabilized, but it runs on makeshift equipment, causing concerns about its ability to withstand any major earthquakes.

TEPCO vice-president Masao Yamazaki, who headed its probe of the disaster, acknowledged that the company had repeatedly underestimated the risk of a tsunami, despite predictions in recent years that such earthquake-generated waves could jump over seawalls protecting reactors. Officials clung to optimistic views instead of taking the side of safety, he said.

"We must admit that our tsunami anticipation was too optimistic, and our insufficient preparations for a tsunami were the fundamental cause of the accident," Yamazaki told a news conference.

Wednesday's report provided an incomplete picture of the accident because of the difficulty of inspecting the inside of the melted reactors.

The company promised to make the best use of the findings to improve safety at its still-functional reactors, which it hopes to restart quickly as it struggles to finance astronomical compensation costs.

But it said the shortcomings disclosed in the report, both in hardware and crisis management, are still unresolved and need more improvement.

It said further efforts are needed to foster flexibility among plant workers and establish a solid line of communication during crises.

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Baby beluga

Whale calf rescued in Alaska

A beluga whale calf, believed to have been separated from his mother during a storm, has been rescued from Alaska's Bristol Bay.

The calf, estimated at two to three days old when it was found Monday, was taken in by the Alaska SeaLife Center after attempts by others to encourage the calf to the open ocean failed.

This is the first beluga the centre has housed.

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Southern Alberta

Fracking protester's charges stayed

The Crown has stayed a charge against a woman involved in a protest against fracking on the Blood reserve in southern Alberta.

Lois Frank was arrested last September and charged with intimidation for standing in front of trucks from Murphy Oil.

A trial was supposed to start Wednesday in provincial court in Cardston.

Frank says it's been a stressful eight months and she's happy it's all over.

Frank says people have to stand up for their rights — and that's exactly what she did.

She says she's still upset at the Blood First Nation's chief and council for making decisions without consulting band members.

"The bigger questions haven't been answered as far as the leadership not consulting people," she said outside court. "They need to listen to the people and not just make decisions like this without talking to us."

Fracking is a controversial technique in which a mix of water, sand and chemicals is pumped deep inside underground rock formations to free gas and oil.

THE CANADIAN PRESS

New course

Manitoba schools to teach eco-literacy

Grade 12 students in Manitoba will soon be offered a new course on the environment. Premier Greg Selinger says the class will be called Global Issues — Citizenship and Sustainability.

He says it will teach students about ecological issues and ethics and will encourage them to become involved in the democratic process.

Selinger made the announcement at the UN conference on sustainable development in Brazil.

THE CANADIAN PRESS

Struggling species

New England herring boats to be monitored

New England fishing regulators on Wednesday moved to determine whether herring trawlers, with their massive nets and stunning efficiency, are wiping out Atlantic herring and doing lasting damage to other struggling northeastern species.

The herring industry says the often-repeated charge is baseless, and there's no reliable evidence their boats are threatening either the fishing industry or the ecosystem.

On Wednesday, the New England Fishery Management Council voted to require independent monitors on every trip for the northeast's largest herring vessels. Both the industry and its critics backed the requirement Wednesday, confident they'll be vindicated when the observers report what the trawlers do and don't pull up.

"We need to clear the air of all the lies that's been spoken over the last five years," said herring fisherman Peter Mullen during the council meeting in Portland, Maine.

The measure isn't expected to go into effect until at least spring 2013, as the industry and managers figure out how pay for it.

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WikiLeaks. Julian Assange cornered in Ecuador

Julian Assange has spent years on the move, trying to keep ahead of authorities who want to stop his secret-spilling mission.

Now the WikiLeaks founder finds himself confined in the surprising setting of Ecuador's London embassy, where he was holed up Wednesday while diplomats discussed his fate and British police waited outside to arrest him if he leaves.

Assange is seeking political asylum in the South American nation, in a dramatic bid to avoid extradition to Sweden for questioning about alleged sex crimes. His supporters say he fears charges in the United States for leaking hundreds of thousands of secret U.S. documents. But some legal experts say it is a desperate and likely futile move.

"He knows he's reached the end of the road in the U.K. He knows he's going to be extradited to Sweden," said Alex Carlile, a senior British lawyer with expertise in extradition matters. "Basically, he has nowhere to go."

The 40-year-old Australian landed himself in legal limbo Tuesday when he took refuge in the embassy a few doors down from the Harrods department store.

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Police stand outside the Ecuadorian embassy in London on Wednesday. TIM HALES/THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Russia

Espionage ruling

A Russian court on Wednesday convicted two professors of a St. Petersburg university of handing over missile secrets to China, the latest in a string of espionage cases that reflected underlying tensions between Moscow and Beijing despite declarations of cooperation and friendship.

The St. Petersburg City Court found Yevgeny Afanasyev and Svyatoslav Bobyshev guilty of treason and sentenced them to 12 1/2 and 12 years in prison respectively, according to the Interfax news agency.

The two professors of St.Petersburg's Baltic State Technological University were accused of selling confidential information related to Russia's latest intercontinental ballistic missile, the Bulava, to representatives of China's military intelligence. The two men have been in custody since their arrest in March 2010.

After decades of Cold War-era rivalry, Moscow and Beijing have developed what they call a strategic partnership after the 1991 Soviet collapse.

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Feminist rockers jailed for punk prayer

Russia. Heated controversy over the detainment of three women who decried President Putin in a Moscow church

Nadezhda Tolokonnikova, member of Pussy Riot, waves to supporters in court. MISHA JAPARIDZE/THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

A group of feminist punk rockers must remain behind bars as police investigate them for chanting a "punk prayer" against Russian President Vladimir Putin from a church pulpit, a court ruled Wednesday.

The decision angered the band's supporters and drew condemnation from a top German human rights official.

Five members of Pussy Riot — wearing brightly colored homemade ski masks and miniskirts — briefly seized the pulpit of Moscow's main Orthodox church, the Christ the Savior Cathedral, in February and chanted "Mother Mary, drive Putin away."

A video of the performance posted on the Internet shows churchgoers gazing on astonished as the women chant, high-kick and dance around the pulpit, and then appear to bow and bless themselves as security arrives to remove them.

Three band members — Nadezhda Tolokonnikova, 23, Maria Alekhina, 24, and Yekaterina Samutsevich, 29 — were arrested and face up to seven years in jail on hooliganism charges.

An investigator petitioned to keep them in prison while the police probe continues, and on Wednesday, a Tagansky district court judge ruled the three will remain held until July 24.

Their cause and the Russian Orthodox Church's harsh response have provoked public outcry.

Pussy Riot gained notoriety in January for performing a song taunting Putin — who was then prime minister — from a spot on Red Square used in czarist Russia for announcing government decrees. Videos of their performances became instant Internet hits.

The band's "punk prayer" took place two weeks before March's presidential vote. Putin won a third presidential term despite a wave of massive protests against his rule.

The church says the women deserve to be prosecuted for their "blasphemous" performance from a place near the altar that no lay persons are allowed to enter, although thousands of believers have signed a petition urging the church to forgive the band.

Attorneys for the band members argued that they should be released because they have young children.

The German government's human rights commissioner, Markus Loening, said he was "dismayed" by the decision to extend the band members' custody and called for their immediate release.

"This decision is clearly directed against freedom of opinion and artistic freedom and, in view of the consequences of nearly four months of custody for the families and children of the women, absolutely disproportionate," Loening said in a statement.

Although church and state are separate under Russia's constitution, the Russian Orthodox Church has claimed a leading role in setting moral guidelines for society. Its growing prominence has caused concern among followers of minority faiths and nonreligious Russians.

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

By the numbers

20

Outside the court building, police detained 20 people as dozens of the band's supporters whistled in unison, chanted anti-Kremlin slogans and clashed with Orthodox activists who called on the band members "to repent."

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Uruguay high on selling pot

Legislation. Reports say a bill to legalize marijuana sales to registered users will be presented to Congress

Quoted

"This measure should be accompanied by efforts to get young people off drugs."

Ruling party Sen. Monica Xavier

Uruguay's government apparently plans to take a step beyond legalizing marijuana: It wants to sell it.

Local news media cited unnamed ruling-party lawmakers saying that the government planned to send a bill to Congress on Wednesday that would legalize marijuana sales as a crime-fighting measure. Only the government would be allowed to sell the marijuana cigarettes, and only to adults registered as users.

Uruguay's presidency did not immediately confirm the report, but told The Associated Press in an email statement that an official announcement later could include "the marijuana issue."

Uruguayan newspaper reports about the bill said that people who use more than a limited number of marijuana cigarettes would have to undergo drug rehabilitation and that money from taxes on the cigarettes would go to rehabilitating addicts. The idea is to weaken crime by removing profits from drug dealers and diverting users from harder drugs.

"This measure should be accompanied by efforts to get young people off drugs," ruling party Sen. Monica Xavier told channel 12 local TV.

Uruguay is among the safest countries in Latin America but recent gang shootouts and rising cocaine seizures have raised security concerns and taken a toll on the already dipping popularity of leftist President Jose Mujica. The Interior Ministry says from January to May, the number of homicides jumped to 133 from 76 in the same period last year.

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Uruguayan law

There are no laws against marijuana use in Uruguay.

- Possession of the drug for personal use has never been criminalized
- A 1974 law gives judges discretion to determine if the amount of marijuana found on a suspect is for legal personal use or for illegal dealing

Steamy air mass calls for a fire hydrant shower

Four-year-old Solaris Arias, of Providence, R.I., right, jumps through water spraying from an open fire hydrant on Wednesday. Much of the state remained under a heat advisory Wednesday afternoon because of the steamy air mass that has moved into the region resulting in temperatures in the high 30s. STEVEN SENNE/THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Bolivia. Drones aid in locating cocaine labs

Bolivia's top anti-drug official is crediting Brazilian reconnaissance drones for a series of recent blows against the cocaine trade.

Felipe Caceres does not provide details about the unmanned aerial vehicles other than to say they are Israeli-made, patrol the border and also enter Bolivian airspace.

Bolivian police say they destroyed more than 240 drug labs early this month in the eastern lowlands state of Santa Cruz, which borders Brazil. Brazil became an important drug-fighting ally for Bolivia after the latter kicked out U.S. drug agents in 2008.

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

World ranking

3rd

Bolivia is the world's No. 3 cocaine-producing nation and officials estimate that 92 per cent of domestic cocaine production heads to Brazil.

Poll. Mexicans still back battle vs. drug traffickers

A new survey finds that eight of 10 Mexicans support the military crackdown against drug traffickers launched in 2006.

The poll released Wednesday by the Pew Research Center finds that 80 per cent of those questioned support the army's active role in the fight.

Still, most also worry about human rights violations by the military and police: About 74 per cent saying that's a big problem.

The survey by the Washington-based centre is based on face-to-face interviews with 1,200 Mexicans from across the country between March 20 and April 2. The error rate is plus or minus 3.8 percentage points.

More than 47,000 people have been killed in drug violence nationwide since President Felipe Calderon began deploying thousands of troops to drug hot spots in December 2006.

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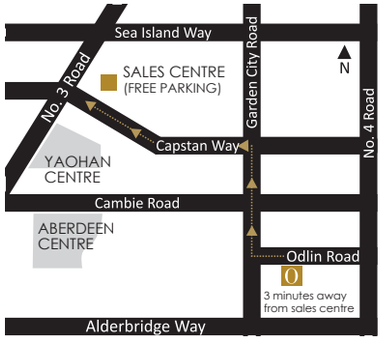

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Home, sweet home for a six-year-old: An Islamabad slum

A six-year-old Afghan refugee named Haleema Metawell watches other children play outside her home in a slum on the outskirts of Islamabad, Pakistan, on Wednesday — World Refugee Day. The Pakistan government and the United Nations refugee agency reached an agreement in 2009 to allow some 1.7 million Afghan refugees living in Pakistan to continue sheltering there until at least 2012. But thousands of them still live without electricity, running water and other basic services. MUHAMMED MUHEISEN/THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

'Invisible' kids facing high risks

World Refugee Day warning. No birth certificate, no papers ... so they're ripe for exploitation, aid worker says

Standing on a New Delhi rail platform, veteran Canadian aid worker Rosemary McCarney watched an incredible scene.

Child stowaways, some as young as seven, were spilling off trains, after riding the rails from rural villages, and were about to disappear into the slums of India's capital, where they'd go to work picking garbage — or worse.

"My team in India says if we don't get to them in eight days, they're trafficked," recalled McCarney, the head of aid agency Plan Canada.

As World Refugee Day came and went on Wednesday, one of the world's most overlooked problems was highlighted: The growing plight of undocumented, "invisible" children.

Many of the kids McCarney saw likely had no identity papers because they were never registered at birth — a situation playing out in Asia, Africa and Latin America.

Undocumented children are vulnerable to a wide range of exploitation, said McCarney, from being forced into becoming child soldiers, sex workers or cheap labourers.

Plan Canada launched its Universal Birth Registration campaign in 2005.

Since then, it has helped register 40 million people in 32 countries, but still 51 million children a year are still not registered at birth.

It means tough times reuniting a child with their family if they do manage to flee an abusive situation.

THE CANADIAN PRESS

Shame. Ex-PM shoots himself after top court rules he must be jailed

A former Romanian prime minister shot and wounded himself Wednesday in an apparent suicide attempt.

It happened just hours after the country's highest court ruled that he must serve a two-year prison sentence on corruption charges, the country's current premier said.

Media reports said Adrian Nastase shot himself in the neck.

He would be Romania's most senior politician to serve time in prison since the 1989 fall of communism.

He had appealed a March 30 court ruling that sentenced him to prison for illegally raising funds for a failed presidential campaign, but the Supreme Court upheld the sentence, sending shockwaves through the country.

The trial sent a signal to the European Union that Romania was finally cracking down on high-level corruption. The EU had demanded tough action.

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Miracle. Boy lives after floods sweep him six blocks through culvert

Residents fled from their homes and animals escaped from pens at a zoo as floods fed by a steady torrential downpour struck northeastern Minnesota.

The city of Duluth was inundated — and an eight-year-old boy was swept about six blocks through a culvert there.

He suffered only scrapes and bruises.

St. Louis County Undersheriff Dave Phillips called it a "miracle out of this whole disaster."

Police officers helped track down a polar bear that got out of its enclosure overnight at the low-lying Lake Superior Zoo, where several animals drowned.

Two seals managed to swim out of the zoo but were quickly recaptured.

Duluth Mayor Don Ness declared a state of emergency after the deluge of up to nine inches of rain that he said caused extensive damage to the port city of about 86,000.

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Death. Fight to revive woman passenger fails, Delta flight diverted

A Delta Air Lines flight from Detroit to Phoenix unexpectedly landed in Colorado Springs, Colo., after a woman on board became unresponsive.

She was later pronounced dead.

Delta spokesperson Chris Kelly Singley said the captain of Flight 1921 diverted the plane to Colorado after a passenger became unresponsive Wednesday.

Flight attendants and a doctor on board performed CPR on the woman.

But after the plane landed around 10 a.m., officials determined that the passenger was dead.

Kelly Singley didn't know whether the passenger died on the plane.

She didn't have details on what led the woman to become unresponsive and said she couldn't disclose the passenger's name or age.

The flight continued on to Phoenix.

There were 151 people on board, it was reported.

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Immigration

New law to curtail deportation appeals

New legislation introduced Wednesday by the Conservative government gives greater powers to the immigration and public safety ministers to determine who gets to come and stay in Canada. The Faster Removal of Foreign Criminals Act seeks to cut off avenues for convicted criminals to appeal their deportation. THE CANADIAN PRESS

Report leaked

PM's security detail thrust into spotlight

RCMP Commissioner Bob Paulson decried Wednesday the leak of an internal report that raised concerns about the prime minister's security detail, calling it "unlawful."

And Paulson also conceded it might boil down to a case of payback against the officer in charge of the unit.

The leak of the management report to Radio-Canada this week thrust a normally low-profile unit into the spotlight. Members of the prime minister's office past and present sprung to the defence of Supt. Bruno Saccomani, saying he had actually brought improvements to the unit.

The management review included interviews with 41 per cent of the 116-member unit, and said a majority of members reported problems with their boss, including intimidation and favouritism. THE CANADIAN PRESS

Thailand deaths

Bodies of Canadian sisters released

The bodies of two Canadian sisters who died in Thailand are expected to arrive home Thursday, a relative said.

Their uncle said that because preliminary autopsies have already been completed, Thai medical authorities have agreed to release the bodies of Audrey and Noemi Belanger, who died under mysterious circumstances. THE CANADIAN PRESS

Khadr's legal team to urge transfer

Press conference. Unlike Khadr's previous lawyers, current group has kept a low profile

Omar Khadr
THE CANADIAN PRESS

The federal government was sticking to its lines about the delayed transfer of convicted war criminal Omar Khadr from Guantanamo Bay on the eve of a Thursday news conference by his normally taciturn legal team.

Two months after an official request by the Americans to take Khadr off their hands, Public Safety Minister Vic Toews said there was nothing new to say about the case.

"I've made no decision in that. I'll make a decision in due course, in accordance with the law."

That's been Ottawa's line ever since it became clear that the Americans were seeking to have the Toronto-born Khadr transferred to Canada to serve out the rest of his sentence.

Khadr, 25, pleaded guilty in October 2010 to war crimes committed in Afghanistan in 2002 as a 15-year-old — including murder, in violation of the rules of war.

In return for his plea before a widely maligned military commission, he was sentenced to eight years, with one year to be served in Guantanamo Bay. He was eligible for transfer last October.

Earlier this year, sources said the transfer — in accordance with promises Ottawa made at the time of Khadr's plea bargain — was on track to happen by the end of May. That hasn't happened.

On Wednesday, Khadr's legal team — Canadian lawyers John Norris and Brydie Bethell, and his Pentagon-appointed lawyers Lt.-Col. Jon Jackson and Maj. Matthew Schwartz — announced they would hold a news conference in Ottawa to update the public on the delayed transfer.

They are to be joined by Sen. Romeo Dallaire, a longtime advocate for child soldiers. THE CANADIAN PRESS

RCMP Act. Top Mountie needs more disciplinary powers, says minister

The federal government wants to arm the RCMP commissioner with greater powers to discipline or even fire people who give the force a bad name.

Public Safety Minister Vic Toews says there is too much red tape in the current process for weeding out wrongdoers.

"There's no doubt that changes are needed," he told a news conference, flanked by RCMP Commissioner Bob Paulson.

"The RCMP Act has not been significantly amended for over 25 years."

Toews announced proposed changes Wednesday, intended to untie Paulson's hands as he looks into complaints.

Several female RCMP officers have come forward since Cpl. Catherine Galliford went public in November with allegations of harassment within the force in British Columbia.

Men have also complained of abusive behaviour and intimidation.

Paulson, who took over as commissioner late last year, says ridding the force of dark-hearted behaviour is one of his priorities.

He recently expressed frustration about the bureaucratic barriers to doing so.

The legislation introduced Wednesday — as the House of Commons prepared to rise for the summer — also includes measures to modernize the watchdog that handles public complaints about the RCMP and enhance transparency when Mounties themselves are under police investigation.

Toews said the RCMP's current disciplinary procedures are outdated and inefficient. THE CANADIAN PRESS

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Wildfire

Greek firefighter dies battling blaze on air-force base

A Greek firefighter died Wednesday while helping to battle a large wildfire inside an air force base west of Athens, authorities say.

A fire department statement said the 28-year-old felt unwell and was rushed to a nearby hospital, where he was pronounced dead.

Greek air force spokesman Constantinos Grapsas said the blaze is not endangering installations at the Elefsina base — primarily used by firefighting and transport planes.

Grapsas said 40 fire engines, seven water-dropping aircraft, one helicopter and 160 firefighters are battling the blaze.

Meanwhile, two firefighters were hospitalized after being injured while battling a separate fire in Salamis, an island off the southern port of Piraeus.

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Suicide bombing

Unconfirmed: 3 U.S. troops and 15 Afghans killed

Pentagon officials say as many as three U.S. troops and 15 Afghans may have been killed in a suicide bombing in eastern Afghanistan.

Officials spoke on condition of anonymity Wednesday because details of the incident were sketchy and the officials weren't authorized to talk about it publicly.

Early reports from Afghans said a car packed with explosives rammed into vehicles in an international military convoy.

But U.S. Defence Department officials say it's not clear whether it was a convoy.

A suicide vest is suspected to have been used.

While the Americans believed killed were all military, U.S. officials say the Afghans were security and civilian. THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

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New Greek PM sworn in, calming fears of calamity

Greece's newly sworn-in Prime Minister Antonis Samaras, centre, waves to supporters in Athens on Wednesday. KOSTAS TSIRONIS/THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Massive challenges ahead. Three-party coalition expected to conform to conditions of bailout

Greek conservative party head Antonis Samaras was sworn in as prime minister Wednesday at the helm of a three-party coalition that will uphold the country's international bailout commitments.

The move ends a protracted political crisis that had cast grave doubt over the country's future in Europe's joint currency and threatened to plunge the continent deeper into a financial crisis with global repercussions.

But the new government still has massive challenges ahead: It must deliver on pledges by its predecessors to generate huge new savings, privatize publicly owned companies and real estate, cut about 150,000 civil service jobs in coming years and open restricted professions to competition.

Samaras, a U.S.-educated 61-year-old economist, was sworn in three days after his New Democracy party won the second national elections in six weeks but without enough votes to form a government on its own. He is Greece's fourth prime minister in eight months.

The conservatives will join forces with the socialist PASOK party, which came in third place, and the smaller Democratic Left led by Fotis Kouvelis. Discussions on the lineup of ministers were to be completed by Wednesday.

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Fraud allegations. Delay in announcing winner of Egyptian election

Egyptian election officials delayed the announcement of the winner of Egypt's presidential election, which had been expected Thursday, and gave no date for a decision, hiking tension as allegations of fraud swirled and each candidate declared he was the victor.

Amid the atmosphere of political confusion, the Muslim Brotherhood claimed there was an organized campaign of allegations against it to mar the election and keep its candidate, Mohammed Morsi, out of the presidency. The accusation raises temperatures and the possibility of a backlash from the Brotherhood if its rival — former prime minister Ahmed Shafiq — is declared the winner.

On top of the potentially explosive dispute over the election is murkiness over the latest health scare of the 84-year-old former dictator Hosni Mubarak. State media reported that he suffered a stroke. Mubarak was ousted last year and is now in jail.

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Torrential downpour strikes Minnesota

A car sits in a giant sinkhole in Duluth, Minnesota, Wednesday. Residents evacuated their homes and animals escaped from pens at a zoo as floods fed by a steady torrential downpour struck northeastern Minnesota, inundating the city of Duluth. THE STAR TRIBUNE, BRIAN PETERSON/THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Dinosaurs with a difference invade museum

Unique show. Ancient creatures from the southern hemisphere include one that weighed as much as 10 elephants

Meet Giganotosaurus: This prehistoric dinosaur will be on display at the ROM in Toronto starting Saturday. NATHAN DENETTE/THE CANADIAN PRESS

Some of the largest and most unusual dinosaurs from the southern hemisphere will be making their Canadian debut at Toronto's Royal Ontario Museum this summer.

The museum will open its new exhibit, Ultimate Dinosaurs: Giants from Gondwana, to the public on Saturday.

It features fossils, skeletons and 17 full-scale skeletal casts of dinosaurs that evolved in isolation in Gondwana, a continent formed when the supercontinent of Pangea split in half.

These dinosaurs look different from the Northern Hemisphere dinosaurs that Canadian and American audiences are used to seeing.

The exhibit uses Augmented Reality technology that allows visitors to scan the creatures through a tablet screen to see them become animated and covered in skin.

The exhibit includes Futalognkosaurus, the largest dinosaur ever mounted in Canada. It's 33.5 metres long and weighed as much as 10 elephants when it roamed the earth. THE CANADIAN PRESS

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Archaeologists find rare mammoth field in Serbia

Digging it. Pit can help shed light on what life was like in the Balkans during the ice age

In this photo taken Tuesday, Miomir Korac, director of the Viminacium archaeological park, left, works on a mammoth tusk at a coal mine with other archaeologists in Kostolac, Sebia, 80 kilometres east of Belgrade. MARKO DROBNJAKOVIC/THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

First there was one. Then another. And another.

Archaeologists in Serbia say they have discovered a rare mammoth field containing the remains of at least five of the giant beasts that lived here tens of thousands of years ago.

The discovery last week at the Kostolac coal mine, east of the Serbian capital of Belgrade, is the first of its kind in the region.

It could offer important insight into the ice age in the Balkans, said Miomir Korac, from Serbia's Archaeology Institute.

"There are millions of mammoth fragments in the world, but they are rarely so accessible for exploration," he told The Associated Press.

"A mammoth field can offer incredible information ... on what life looked like in these areas during the ice age."

The remains were found during coal excavation about 20 metres below ground.

In 2009, a well-preserved skeleton of a much older mammoth was found at the same site. Vika — as the female skeleton was dubbed — is up to one million years old and belonged to the largely furless, so-called southern mammoth.

The bones discovered last month likely belong to the so-called woolly mammoth, which disappeared some 10,000 years ago, said Sanja Alaburic, a mammoth expert from Serbia's Museum of Natural History.

Alaburic explained that "this discovery is interesting because, unusually, there are many bones in one place," probably brought there by torrential waters.

Korac said Serbian archaeologists already have contacted colleagues in France and Germany for consultation.

He said at least six months of work will be needed before all the bones are unearthed.

Another mammoth skeleton was discovered in northern Serbia in 1996. It belonged to a female mammoth that lived about 500,000 years ago and is now on display in the town of Kikinda, near the Hungarian border.

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Long stretch

20

Miomir Korac said the mammoth field stretches over some 20 acres of sandy terrain.

For more news visit metronews.ca

No threat to land

Tropical Storm Chris's intensity may have peaked

Tropical Storm Chris may have maxed out on its strength as it moves toward energy-sapping cooler waters in the northern Atlantic.

The storm isn't expected to threaten land.

The storm's maximum sustained winds had increased to 95 kilometres per hour by late Wednesday. Forecasters said earlier Wednesday that the storm had probably reached its peak intensity.

Chris is centred about 1,022 kilometres south of Cape Race, N.L., and is moving east-northeastward. A forecast map predicts that the storm will stay well away from land through the weekend.

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Illegal dig

Italians to get back ancient jug

The Toledo Museum of Art says it will return an ancient water jug to Italy that investigators believe was probably illegally dug up from that country years ago.

The 2,500-year-old water vessel, or kalpis, has been on display at the Ohio museum since 1982, when it was purchased from an antiquities dealer in Switzerland.

"The right thing to do is to return this object," museum Director Brian Kennedy told The Blade newspaper. "We knew we'd likely lose this. We'll miss it." THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

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RIM shares down as job cuts start in bid to save $1B

Research in Motion. Analyst estimates BlackBerry maker could cut 3,000 employees — after 2,000 cuts last year

BlackBerry-maker Research in Motion Ltd. has begun the grim task of cutting jobs in a bid to save $1 billion as part of a plan to right the company as it races to bring its new models to market later this year.

The company said Wednesday that it's looking for at least $1 billion in savings by the end of its 2013 financial year and job cuts are part of that plan.

RIM — which did not provide specific numbers regarding the cuts — is expected to provide a business update when it reports its first-quarter results on June 28.

Wedbush Securities analyst Scott Sutherland estimated that RIM could cut as many as 3,000 employees in its bid to reduce costs, which would top last year's cut of around 2,000.

"I think RIM is finally making the hard decisions," he said.

"It is a tough time for them, but they need to ensure profitability, speed to market, and get these new devices out."

Sutherland said much is riding on a new line of BlackBerry phones powered by the BlackBerry 10 operating system, which are expected later this year.

Advance estimates on how many jobs would be lost ranged wildly from 2,000, or about 12 per cent of the workforce, to 5,000, or about 30 per cent.

Last July, RIM laid off about 11 per cent of its workforce, or 2,000 employees, marking the biggest employee reduction in its history.

THE CANADIAN PRESS

Offices

In addition to its main base in Waterloo, Ont., RIM also has a customer-service centre in Halifax that services users in Canada, the U.S. and South America.

- Other smaller offices are based in Mississauga, Ont., and Ottawa where they have been combined with staff of QNX Software Systems, the company that designed the operating system behind the PlayBook and the next generation of BlackBerry devices.

Burger King goes public, again

Burger King Corp. CEO Bernardo Hees, right, talks with specialist Donald Himpele on the floor of the New York Stock Exchange Wednesday after the world's No. 2 hamburger chain began trading as a public company again under the ticker symbol "BKW." The Miami-based chain had last traded as a public company between 2006 and 2010, before it was purchased and taken private by investment firm 3G Capital. RICHARD DREW/THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Market Minute

DOLLAR 98.12¢ (-0.09¢)

Natural gas: $2.517 US (-2.8¢)
Dow Jones: 12,824.39 (-25.35)

TSX 11,759.34 (-29.02)

OIL $81.80 US (-$2.23)

GOLD $1,615.80 US (-$7.40)

U.S. Federal Reserve

Fed extends 'Twist' program with $267B

The U.S. Federal Reserve acted Wednesday to lift an economy held back by a weakened job market, extending a program designed to spur borrowing and spending through lower long-term U.S. interest rates.

After a two-day meeting, the Fed said in a statement that it will continue a program called Operation Twist through year's end. Under the program, the Fed has been selling $400 billion US in short-term Treasurys since September and buying longer-term Treasurys. It said it will extend the program through December using $267 billion in securities. THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Satellite radio

SiriusXM Canada wants relaxed content rules

Money-losing satellite radio provider SiriusXM Canada wants its mandatory contributions to Canadian content development slashed by the federal broadcast regulator to better compete with conventional radio stations.

The Toronto-based satellite radio company will appear before the Canadian Radio-television and Telecommunications Commission on Thursday to have its licence renewed, the first renewal since it was granted in 2005.

SiriusXM Canada will ask the CRTC to cut its yearly contribution from five per cent of its gross revenues to 0.5 per cent — the rate paid by commercial radio station operators.

THE CANADIAN PRESS

Aerospace

Bombardier lands leasing contract

Bombardier Aerospace has won an order from Danish leasing company Nordic Aviation Capital for 12 CRJ1000 aircraft that will be leased to Garuda Indonesia airlines.

The firm order is valued at $595 million US at list prices.

Garuda is the launch customer in the Asia-Pacific region for Bombardier's latest regional jet. It directly ordered six aircraft in February and has options for 18 more planes.

THE CANADIAN PRESS

Economy. Momentum to slow, forecasts project

New private-sector forecasts see Canada's economy struggling to maintain momentum in the next two years, held back by weak job growth and vulnerable to both external and internal shocks.

Under this scenario, the CIBC says Canadians will likely be able to take advantage of historically low interest rates into 2014. But the Bank of Canada need not be overly worried about households continuing to pile on debt as a result of generous loan conditions, it added to its latest economic report released Wednesday, which noted that credit growth continues to slow even with today's low interest rates.

The two forecasts — from CIBC and Capital Economics — both project the Canadian economy will register the lowest annual growth rates since the recession in the next two years. CIBC says growth will average 2.1 per cent in both 2012 and 2013, whereas Capital Economics expects an even slower pace, at two per cent in 2012 and 1.5 per cent in 2013.

THE CANADIAN PRESS

StatsCan. 5.8 people jobless for every vacancy

Statistics Canada says there was an average of 248,000 job vacancies in the country in three-month period ended in March, up 19,000 from the same period in 2011.

However, it says there were just 5.8 unemployed people for every vacancy, down from 6.5 in March 2011.

The agency says the decline in the ratio of unemployment to job vacancies was a result of both the increase in vacancies and a decline in the number of unemployed people.

There were 16 people for every vacancy in Newfoundland and Labrador in March, 13.6 in New Brunswick and 10.2 in Nova Scotia, little changed from the previous year.

The ratios in Ontario and Quebec were also little changed at 7.6 and 7.2 respectively, while Alberta had the lowest ratio, with 1.8 people out of work for every job vacancy.

The construction sector had the biggest decline in the unemployment-to-job vacancies ratio, with 8.3 unemployed people for every vacant job in the quarter ended in March, down from 14.4 in the same period a year earlier. THE CANADIAN PRESS

Unemployed

8.3

The construction sector had the biggest decline in the unemployment-to-job vacancies ratio, with 8.3 unemployed people for every vacant job in the quarter ending in March, down from 14.4 in the same period a year earlier.

Energy. Alberta's crude oil production up 7%

Alberta's crude oil production in 2011 rose seven per cent from 2010 levels, the first rise in production since 1995, the Energy Resources Conservation Board said Wednesday.

Alberta's crude oil production was 77,900 cubic metres, or 490,000 barrels of oil per day, with a total of 28.4 million cubic metres or 179 million barrels in 2011, the board said in a release.

The increase is due to the higher production rates of horizontal wells, the board said. In 2011, Alberta had an eight per cent increase over its 2010 oil sands production.

The province produced 277,000 cubic metres, or 1.7 million barrels a day, of raw crude bitumen from the oilsands for a yearly total of 101 million cubic metres, or 637 million barrels.

THE CANADIAN PRESS

Barrels

1.7M

Alberta produced 1.7 million barrels a day of raw crude bitumen from the oilsands last year.

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Analysis

Short-term fixes hit constraints

Lots of ideas for strengthening the foundations of the euro have been floated. But most would take years to implement. Many short-term fixes run up against legal or political restrictions or simple lack of funds. European leaders held intensely awaited summits last year in March, July and December; none produced a convincing resolution.

Other ideas up for discussion include more central supervision of banks, whose losses have been a key financial burden for governments; EU-wide backing for bank deposits; and some form of common borrowing in which countries would share responsibility. Most of those ideas would require EU legislation or treaty changes that would take months or years. All face some kind of political controversy since they involve countries giving up power to EU-level bodies or being exposed to other people's financial risks.

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Italy floats bond-purchase idea, but funds are limited

European debt. No clear path out of crisis in lead-up to week of meetings between national leaders

Summit

Finance ministers from the 17 countries that use the euro will launch a closely watched series of meetings on Thursday, when they gather in Luxembourg.

- That meeting will lay the groundwork for a summit of national leaders in Brussels on June 28-29.

Europe's leaders are grasping for ideas to halt their government debt crisis ahead of a series of top-level meetings over the next 10 days.

The latest: Using their emergency bailout funds to buy up government bonds on the open market.

The last two and a half years of Europe's government debt crisis have seen Greece, Ireland and Portugal seek multibillion-euro bailouts after high borrowing costs made it impossible for them to finance their debts on the international bond markets.

Now markets-watchers fear Spain and Italy may soon be joining the bailout club as their borrowing costs spiral ever higher.

The leaders of the 17 countries that use the euro have been under global pressure to find a substantial solution to the debt crisis rather than piecemeal measures that provide only temporary relief.

At this week's G20 summit of world economic powers in Los Cabos, Mexico, politicians including U.S. President Barack Obama called on Europe to find a solution to the debt crisis. Late last year, U.K. Prime Minister David Cameron urged euro area governments to use a "big bazooka" on the problem.

One more solution emerged late Tuesday night on the sidelines of the G20 summit. Italy's Prime Minister Mario Monti urged looking at using Europe's €500-billion emergency bailout funds — the European Financial Stability Facility and the European Stability Mechanism — to buy government bonds on the open market.

The emergency bond purchases are the latest idea leaders appear to be clutching at after a bailout of Spanish banks and the hoped-for victory of pro-bailout politicians in Greece did not halt market turmoil.

The EFSF and ESM both have the power to buy government bonds.

They can do so directly from governments at auction, thus loaning money directly to the government, or on the secondary market from other investors that hold them.

In both cases, the idea would be to drive up the price of the bonds and bring the borrowing cost, or yield, down — price and yield move in opposite directions.

But there are obstacles. The combined capacity of the two bailout funds will be €500 billion after the ESM is due to come into effect in July.

And €100 billion of that has already been committed to help Spain bail out its banks, which have suffered heavy losses from making real estate loans that aren't being repaid.

Analysts fear the funds wouldn't have enough money to cope effectively with €2.5 trillion in combined Italian and Spanish debt.

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

A woman receives a packet of free vegetable as handouts as politicians try to finalize a potential

When darkness falls, so do prices.

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*Offer valid Friday, June 22 from 6pm – midnight. Not valid in Quebec. While supplies last. No rain checks. Selection may vary by store. Not all products available online. Not applicable on previous purchases. See store for details. †HEM

others wait in line, in Athens, Wednesday. Hundreds of poverty-stricken Greeks are queuing for free vegetable power-sharing deal that would end weeks of political uncertainty. PETROS KARADJIAS/THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Greece. Weak European state still delivers

A conversation in struggling Greece is, often as not, about the superlatives of doom: The country is on the edge, the people are headed toward catastrophe, and the state, drained of cash and lasting political consensus, has effectively ceased to function.

Yet in Athens, home to nearly half the population, the garbage trucks make the rounds at night, traffic police in smart blue uniforms pull over motorists, and tourists stroll around the ancient sites or lug suitcases on wheels through the heat-soaked side-streets.

Standard of living

"Yes, Greece's economy is experiencing significant hardship, but it is still a relatively functional country, is democratic, most (though, perhaps, rapidly fewer) have a decent standard of living and the country is at very little risk of conflict."

J.J. Messner, a senior associate at The Fund for Peace

For a country where crisis has become an intimate state of mind, there is plenty of benign normalcy around, lots of reminders of the rules and infrastructure and hygiene standards that define what it is to be a Western European country, imperfections notwithstanding.

Greece's election on Sunday may not ultimately deliver a way out of economic stagnation and the chronic uncertainty that threatens to rattle the global economy, but the near-total absence of violence at the polls, and the pro forma concession speeches of the defeated candidates, spoke to a system that, in the broadest sense, works. On Monday, The Fund for Peace, a Washington-based research group, released its annual "Failed States Index," which measures the political, economic and social pressures on nations around the world. It rated Greece as "stable" but declining, at 138 out of 177 countries, with No. 1 Somalia judged to be the most troubled country and highest-ranked Finland seen as the most successful. As a state, Greece was considered in vastly better shape than emerging powers Russia (No. 83) and Turkey (No. 85).

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CONSERVATIVES' GUIDE TO CALLING SOMEONE AN A-HOLE

HE SAYS...
John Mazerolle
metronews.ca/hesays

FROM: Conservative party headquarters
TO: All MPs
SUBJECT: Email etiquette

Dear MPs,

As you've probably heard, we had an email faux pas this week when the immigration minister hit "reply all" on an email, making this the most open and transparent this government has ever been.

Jason Kenney meant to call Alberta's deputy premier a "complete and utter Albertan" but — wouldn't you know it? — auto-correct or spell-check or some darn thing changed it to a different A-word. I won't say which one, but let's just say it's not as clean as the oilsands (officially).

While as a Canadian majority government we can technically do whatever we want, it's important to remember some of the basic rules of email etiquette to better facilitate relationships and to make our day-to-day jobs easier.

The basics:

- Always use a pleasant greeting and closing. If you are a federal minister, try to steer clear of the A-bomb.
- Address your contact with the proper level of formality. If they are the deputy premier of a major province, go with "Mr. Jerkface."
- Writing in all caps, adding italics or writing "!!!" does not make your point any more forceful. However, if you *DO ALL THREE???* I think the impact speaks for itself.

Spam and scam:

- Be wary of spam, especially emails that seem out of character for the sender. Porn links from the Saudi family, for instance, are almost certainly spam unless it's from Deputy Minister of Defence Khalid bin Sultan. Dude is off the hook.
- Make sure you're not accidentally deleting emails from the Spam-meat headquarters in Burlington, Ont. Once, we didn't reply to their emails for months and we missed a picnic invite.
- It's unacceptable to send corny or tasteless jokes in weird fonts and tell people to pass it on. That's what Facebook is for.

International relations:

- Always respond promptly to Nigerian princes. They're royalty, for goodness sake, and they need your help.
- Done properly, a nod to an foreign associate's culture can be well received. (E.g., "Congratulations on your son's marriage. UOL!" The UOL stands for ululating out loud.)
- "Please!" and "Thank you!" go a long way when lecturing other countries about how to run their economies.
- Finally, remember that even the tensest diplomatic exchange can be livened up with Comic Sans.

Hopefully this brief refresher course helped! Please forward this to five other people in your office by midnight or you will never find true love.

Also, if you have anything to say about Kenney, please hit "reply to sender" only.

Many thanks,
Conservative Party of Canada

Minister of Immigration Jason Kenney has apologized to Alberta Deputy Premier Thomas Lukaszuk for his comment. SEAN KILPATRICK/ THE CANADIAN PRESS

Germany — the missing piece

ALEXANDER ZEMLIANICHENKO/THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Russia-Germany

Putting the puzzle together

People put together a jigsaw puzzle of a self-portrait of German artist Albrecht Durer in front of the state historical museum and a monument to Soviet-era Marshal Georgy Zhukov in Manezh Square outside the Kremlin in Moscow on Wednesday. The 300-square-metre puzzle is being set up on the occasion of the German Year in Russia.

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Celebration

- The joint exhibition Germans and Russians — 1,000 Years of History, Art, and Culture, is the highlight of the opening of the German Year in Russia.
- On the German side, the Prussian Cultural Heritage Foundation is in charge of the exhibition, which will be shown at the Neues Museum in Berlin starting in October in connection with the beginning of the Russia Year in Germany.

Countries collaborating

"The projects, which have been jointly conceived by Russian and German partners, place a high value on co-operation and exchange."

Minister of State Cornelia Pieper, in a statement regarding the collaboration between Germany and Russia.

Cost

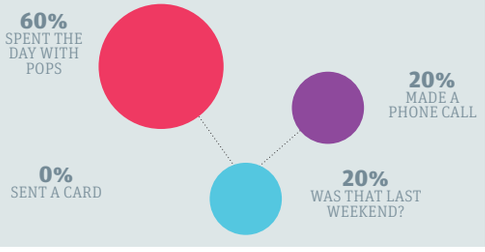
€3.6M

This year's German Year programming is funded with 3.6 million euros ($4.7 million) from public funds.

Metropolitan Panel

Register at metropolitanpanel.ca and take the quick poll

For Father's Day, you ...



Twitter

@VanCityVogue: Hang out with @maryzilba & @FionaForbes tonight 7PM @ChinoisYaletown for the season finale of @RHOVancouver #Vancouver

@JuliaDilworth: So funny how people look perfectly normal until they pick up cigarette butts off the street. #vancouver

@krawl_Ice: "@SophieTSimmons: vancouver today for some fun" woohoo!!

@CallumIrving: Beautiful day in Vancouver, love this weather! Looking forward to some good training this week before we fly to Dallas Sunday! #WhitecapsFC

@RezaPeyk: Alooo??? Vancouver? I'll be @theComedyMIX on Burrard this weekend. Fri/Sat. I'm also there TONITE! 830pm showtime. Come let's play! #fb

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Get 'em to the Greek

Opa! Greek Day is just around the corner, and for the non Greeks out there, that means indulging in delicious food

BACKSTAGE PASS
Graeme McRanor
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You don't have to be Greek to celebrate Greek Day. You just have to get to Broadway on Sunday.

That's right, my keftedes-loving friends, it's time to get your opa on. What does that mean for those of us who aren't Greek?

Food, of course!

Do you smell that? That the savoury deliciousness of 23 food vendors in one location. All serving authentic Greek fare.

Sweet mother of saganaki! (Greek myth: when I lived in Athens in the '90s, the country ran out of saganaki.)

Load up on Loukoumades, gulp down a gyro and, after you get your fill of fillos, head down to the Boutari Wines Cooking Tent and take in some fiery cooking demonstrations by local Greek chefs (including Harry Kambolis from NU).

Still hungry? Hit the Hellenic Experience Tent and sample some Greek olives. Or try some Greek coffee or tea.

Check out the Athenian Agora Market Place for cool souvenirs by local artisans and don't forget to take in all the music and dancing on the main stage.

There's also a kids area where little ones can make olive wreaths, hats and mosaics. Face painting, balloons and bouncy castle will also be in full effect. Opa!

Event details

- **Greek Day 2012 takes place June 24 from 11 a.m. to 9 p.m., 3230 West Broadway St. For more information and to download the program guide, visit greekday.com.**

Girls hand out Greek flags during Greek Day 2006 in Kitsilano. JEFF HODSON/METRO FILE

2

SCENE

Scene in brief

Mulroney says Good Morning

One of Canada's best-known TV personalities is joining the weekend edition of Good Morning America. ABC says Ben Mulroney will begin appearing on the New York-based series this Saturday. That's in addition to his ongoing role as co-anchor of CTV's entertainment show eTalk. The job follows Mulroney's two recent appearances as co-host of the morning talk show Live! with Kelly Ripa. Those stints marked Mulroney's first broadcasting gigs in front of a U.S. audience. In a release, ABC News president Ben Sherwood calls Mulroney "a terrific broadcaster" who is "quick on his feet and excels at live television."

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On the web

Jacksons prepare 16-city tour without brother Michael, three years after his death

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7 babes of summer

Hollywood producers grease their odds of success by spreading the star power on thick, adding a smattering of CGI and sticking with refried franchise reboots, saucy sequels and piquant prequels. The seasoning they choose may change from year to year, but the zing of choice remains habanero-pepper-hot babes.

MIKE DOJC
ichill.ca

ALL PHOTOS GETTY IMAGES

Emma Stone, The Amazing Spider-Man

Despite the inherent creepiness of Jim Carrey's infamous video valentine to Stone, his sordid soliloquy is still endemic of the hormonal effect this raspy-voiced firecracker summons up: "I just wanted to let you know that I think you're all the way beautiful. Not just pretty, but, you know, smart and kind-hearted. And if I were a lot younger, I would marry you, and we would have chubby little freckled faced kids. We'd laugh all day long."

Kate Beckinsale, Total Recall

At times it's hard to tell who has a bigger crush on this gorgeous Brit: the Underworld fanboys who lapped up all four iterations of the vampires vs werewolves race war or Hollywood hotshots. With Beckinsale by his side in a fetching white strapless number at the 2012 Golden Globes while presenting an award, comedian Seth Rogen couldn't help himself. "Hello, I'm Seth Rogen, and I'm currently trying to conceal a massive erection," he quipped, clearly not reading off the teleprompter.

Anne Hathaway, The Dark Knight Rises

After catapulting into the spotlight with the Princess Diaries series, the fresh-faced ingenue eventually shed her Disney training wheels and navigated toward more mature and complex characters in Brokeback Mountain and Love and Other Drugs. Hathaway is bound to get the temperature rising when she fills out the figure-hugging Catwoman suit, taking the torch from Halle Berry, Michelle Pfeiffer and all the other smoldering actresses that have caught a bad case of cat scratch fever in Gotham City.

Nikolette Noel, The Expendables 2

When a film has more testosterone then a cell-block at San Quentin you need a lights-out looker to represent womankind. This time out, we lose Mickey Rourke and Steve Austin, but alongside Stallone, Statham, Li, Lundgren, Couture and company are Schwarzenegger and Willis in full-on roles, and Chuck Norris and Jean Claude Van Damme. The daughter of a Hungarian model, this is Noel's highest profile role to date. She plays wife to Liam Hemsworth and no doubt will draw the eye of every other dude.

Mila Kunis, Ted

Mila's it-girl factor has risen meteorically since her days on That 70s Show. Recent risqué roles in Black Swan and Friends with Benefits catapulted her into the Top 10 rankings on practically every "Sexiest Women on the Planet" list in the last couple years. Yet becoming one of the most desired leading ladies in the business has not messed with her head. Last July, a sergeant stationed in Afghanistan made a video asking her out on a date to a Marine Corps Ball with him, and Kunis took him

Rihanna, Battleship

The green-eyed songstress is a remarkably appropriate choice for this $200 million reimagining of the naval war game Milton Bradley originally conceived in 1931. Whenever the need arises the Barbadian beauty can always open her Umbrella to shield herself from an incoming plastic peg. And if the aliens sink her team's submarine (What? You thought the movie would just be Liam Neeson making googly eyes at Rihanna across the deck?), she can just belt out of Man Down. Unlike her racy 2010 album Rated-R, this flick is PG-13, but with Rihanna and Brooklyn Decker aboard, this ship could float a little longer than the Bismarck.

Scarlett Johansson, The Avengers

You'd think with Thor, Captain America, Iron Man, the Hulk, and Nick Fury et al jockeying for screen time the Black Widow would get short thrift. But hey, just because Black Widow's superpowers are pretty puny when compared to her fellow Avengers, nobody tosses Scar-Jo in a corner. One of the most memorable scenes in the flick is Johansson bound to a chair surrounded by a trio of baddies whom she confidently dispatches in stunning fashion. Whether she's zipping into a leather suit or decked out in S.H.I.E.L.D casual, her curves are always set to stun.

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Monsters beware

Abe Lincoln is not the only historical figure who could tangle with the forces of the supernatural and come out on top. These five warriors bring different — but no less effective — weapons in the fight against the forces of darkness.

MICHELLE CASTILLO
Metro News World

Florence Nightingale

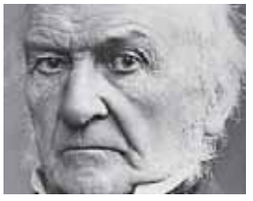
Legendary nurse saved countless lives in the Crimean War, and the "lady with the lamp" was a trailblazer for sanitation and hygiene. Her skills would be priceless for containing the infectious zombie plagues that are becoming a constant nuisance.

Cleopatra

The Egyptian pharaoh was a mystic who liked to experiment with witchcraft and substances. So who better to take on the bandaged terror of The Mummy where it lives?

Horatio Nelson

British naval captain and hero of the Napoleonic wars. With such pedigree on the high seas we believe Nelson would have been an expert dragon slayer, capable of dousing any flames, and would have experience with sea monsters too.



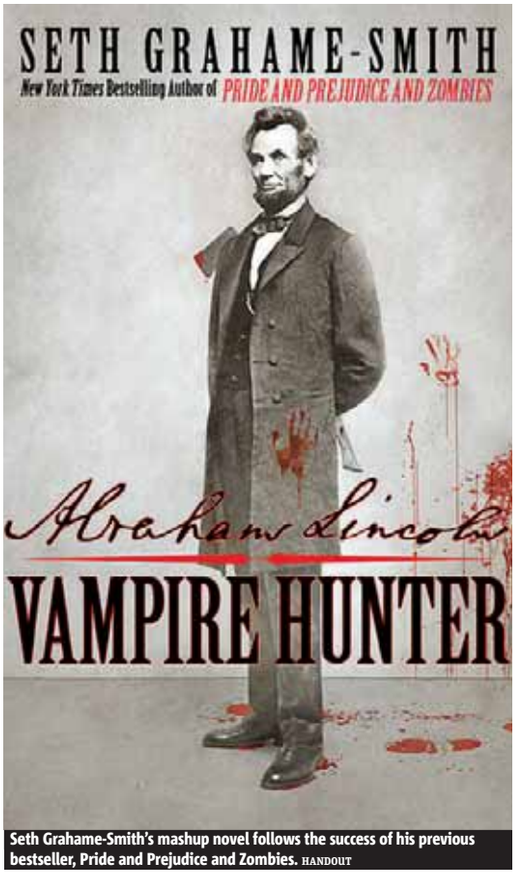
William Gladstone

One of Britain's longest-serving prime ministers. When Gladstone wasn't handling business, he was happiest in his garden, where he earned a reputation for being green-thumbed. Useful in case of a Triffid-style mutant plant attack, or if the Little Shop of Horrors returns.

George Washington

The first U.S. president was an excellent shot and a keen fox hunter. We see no reason why those skills couldn't be transferred to scarier, hairier dogs — such as werewolves.

Who can say Lincoln didn't kill vampires?


SETH GRAHAME-SMITH
New York Times Bestselling Author of PRIDE AND PREJUDICE AND ZOMBIES
Abraham Lincoln
VAMPIRE HUNTER

Seth Grahame-Smith's mashup novel follows the success of his previous bestseller, Pride and Prejudice and Zombies. HANDOUT

Imaginative mashup. Author Seth Grahame-Smith came up with the idea after seeing Lincoln and Twilight books together

MICHELLE CASTILLO
scene@metronews.ca

Abraham Lincoln was secretly a vampire hunter? Only the detailed, imaginative mind of Seth Grahame-Smith could come up with a tale like this. He's made a living from mashups, like Pride and Prejudice and Zombies and the Dark Shadows.

Metro World News spoke to him about his inspirations and why he chose Lincoln as his "historical revisionist" project.

So, how do you come up with this stuff?
This idea specifically was a weird organic outgrowth of Pride and Prejudice and Zombies. I was going around the country promoting that in 2009, which was coincidentally the bicentennial of Lincoln's birth so every bookstore I'd go into no matter where it was in the United States, I'd see the same display of Lincoln books, biographies, things like that. And, then inevitably there would be the Twilight: True Blood table next to it. I started to draw the distinction of if everywhere you go there are vampire books right in front of the stores, and everywhere you go there are Lincoln books right in front of the stores. It stands to reason that…

Maybe Abraham Lincoln was a vampire hunter?
Maybe there's something to combining them. It just began, a fun little game within myself imagining what it would be like. Would Lincoln be a vampire? I thought, "No that's not really true to his ideals. He would be a vampire hunter. That got me interested enough to read about the real man, and when I started to read about the Lincoln legend I got hooked into it and started to see where all of the opportunities were to add the genre twist to it.

Abraham Lincoln is pretty well-known in the U.S.. What do you think international audiences can glean from it?
What we've made here isn't so much a political movie about a president as much as a superhero movie. It's a superhero origin movie really.

I think they would approach it as — I hope they would see it — whether they know much about Lincoln or not, he's an interesting guy who lived in the 19th century who made himself into — and this is in real life too — something extraordinary.

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The primary characters of Pixar's latest animated feature film Brave are, from left, King Fergus (voiced by Billy Connolly), Queen

Brave may seem familiar, but it's actually all new

Fairy tale feel. The filmmakers wanted audiences to be lulled into thinking they know what's happening but don't

IN FOCUS
Richard Crouse
scene@metronews.ca

If you walk away from seeing Brave, the new Pixar princess movie, feeling as though the story was familiar, that was on purpose.

"We wanted it have that feeling where you wonder, 'Was that a real fairy tale?'" says producer Katherine Sarafian. "Because it feels like a classic, dark ancient tale but told in a new way."

Director Mark Andrews adds that it took years to fine-tune the story. "We didn't really have the story done, done-done-done-itty-done-done in all its permutations, until December of last year." He says. "In the last three months I honed it. That happens by watching it over and over and over again."

"The film will tell you what it needs and it doesn't need much," says Sarafian. "It doesn't need every bit of dialogue ever recorded. You need to get the point across."

The inspiration for the story of Merida (voiced by Kelly Macdonald), a flame-haired

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Elinor (Emma Thompson) and Merdia (Kelly Macdonald). HANDOUT

Break out the bagpipes

Set in ancient Scotland, many of Brave's voice actors are actually Scottish.

- **Kelly Macdonald as Merida,** was born in Glasgow and still lives there with her husband Dougie Payne from the band Travis.
- **Billy Connolly as King Fergus** was also born in Glasgow, and returned there in 2005 after years of living in Hollywood.
- **Robbie Coltrane as Lord Dingwall.** Born in Ruthergen, Coltrane had to adopt an English accent to play Hagrid in the Harry Potter series.
- **Craig Ferguson as Lord Macintosh.** Also born in Glasgow, he wrote a book called American on Purpose about his immigration experience.
- **Kevin McKidd as Lord MacGuffin.** Born in Elgin, he is best known for his role in Trainspotting, a harrowing film about growing up in Scotland.

tomboy-turned-princess, who clashes with her mother and learns that you have to be careful what you wish for — especially when that wish is granted by an absent-minded witch — came from a number of sources.

"There are stories about people changing onto animals," said Andrews. "There are stories about asking for a wish and it going wrong and teaching you a lesson. There are all those aspects of it in different pieces so we built this thing from scratch; pulling ideas that we know have worked in other places."

The final stop before theatres is the head office of Pixar, home to hits like Finding Nemo, The Incredibles, WALL-E, Up and Toy Story 3.

"The people I have to show the film to have been through it," says Andrews. "They have Academy Awards, so if they say, 'I smell a rat,' I have to get back in there. They are the best guys to have on your side. I want their response."

"Our bosses are creative," says Sarafian. "They have all directed, rather than having suits or business people make the decisions by focus group or budget. They're making decisions based on what they find entertaining based on their experiences and training."

The result is a classic feeling film, with no pop culture references. "We didn't want to be glib," said Sarafian, "we want generations to watch it."

Quoted

"We didn't want to be glib; we want generations to watch it."

Katherine Sarafian, Brave producer
Explaining why there are no pop culture references in the film

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Christoph Waltz, left, and Jamie Foxx play 1850s bounty hunters in Quentin Tarantino's Django Unchained. HANDOUT

Tarantino up to his old tricks again with Django Unchained

Wild West. Foxx, DiCaprio and Waltz give performances that bring back memories of Inglorious Basterds, director's other films

Quentin Tarantino is rewriting history again with his upcoming film, Django Unchained.

After the success of his much-lauded World War II fiction film Inglourious Basterds, Tarantino is heading to the Wild West and time travelling to the years where slavery was still legal in America.

Jaime Foxx is the new Samuel L. Jackson — he might not have the cadence and the voice, but, just by the short clips of Foxx brandishing a pistol and cracking a whip, you know that he is one BAMF.

Leonardo DiCaprio is the new Brad Pitt — but evil at first, I had to do a double take to make sure that Lt. Aldo Raine (played by Brad Pitt in Inglourious Basterds) wasn't starring in this film. Thanks to slight variations on their facial hair, I was able to tell the difference.

While both actors had to adopt Southern accents in their Tarantino appearances, DiCaprio plays a smooth villain — which is a far cry from Pitt's boisterous war hero.

Christoph Waltz is a very versatile actor. Waltz's memorable role as a shrewd Nazi in Inglourious Basterds won him an Oscar.

Now he's back working with Tarantino. It seems like he'll be one of the heroes, a testament to the fact that no matter what part he plays you can't keep your eyes off of him.

Dog the Bounty Hunter looks like a crossing guard compared to these two.

If one of the movie's tag lines — "Life, Liberty and the Pursuit of Vengence" — didn't give you a hint that there would be blood in this film, then the fact that Tarantino — the master of dialogue, 360-degree pans around tables and gratuitous violence — is directing this film should have tipped you off.

The director isn't blatantly ripping off an old film, thank you very much. In the final bar scene, Django (Jamie Foxx) is sitting next to Django (Franco Nero). Nero starred in 1966's Django, a spaghetti western where he, a gunslinger, had to battle the KKK and a gang of Mexican Bandits.

For all those people out there who constantly complain that all of Tarantino's films are ripped off from somewhere and that he never gives the original films credit, here's his nod that he recognizes where he got his influences from. METRO WORLD NEWS

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Keeping it all in the family

Remake. Son of Benji creator searches for scruffy mutt to create a modern day Benji

Have you seen this dog?

It's a mutt — mischievous, medium-sized, scruffy and street-smart with soulful eyes. Comfortable as hero or underdog, yet likely to be a stray. Must be a fast learner, able to charm millions and willing to work for food.

Brandon Camp, whose father created Benji nearly 40 years ago, and veteran movie trainer Mark Forbes have set out to find a new Benji in a nationwide search that includes online tools and sites that weren't around when the first four Benjis were discovered.

A Facebook page (facebook.com/benjithemovie) has been set up so pet owners and shelter staffs can post pictures and videos of dogs they think could be the next Benji.

Camp and Forbes will scour photos of pets from shelters and rescues across the country, along with sites like petfinder.com and adoptapet.com. Forbes said he was personally visiting every shelter within 75 miles of Los Angeles, where he is general manager and head trainer at Birds and Animals Unlimited.

The original 1974 movie Benji is about a stray who helps save two kidnapped children. It was written, produced, directed and financed by Camp's father, Joe Camp. When he couldn't find a distributor, he and his wife, the late Carolyn Camp, decided to do it themselves.

There would be four sequels, several TV specials, a Saturday morning TV series, a syndicated comic strip and all kinds of merchandizing deals.

More than 73 million people would see Benji at theatres and more than a billion people around the world watch it on television. Millions of DVDs would be sold.

The original Benji was Higgins, adopted in the early 1960s from the Burbank Animal Shelter by late animal trainer Frank Inn. Higgins played Dog in the television series Petticoat Junction for several years. At the age of 14, he became Benji.

The second Benji was Higgins' daughter, the third was a distant relative and the fourth was adopted from the Humane Society of South Mississippi.

"I only have snapshot memories of the original," said Brandon Camp, who was just 3 years old when Benji came out. "The second Benji is the one I grew up with and travelled with and knew and loved."

The dog was so much a part of his life, he was nicknamed Benji at school. The two of them were constantly on the go — from White House Easter egg hunts to morning shows, late shows and show-and-tells.

"I missed most of my first grade because I was travelling around with Benji," said Camp, who directed Love Happens.

When he was 6 or 7, Camp went to New York so Benji could ride a float in the Macy's parade, where thousands of people were trying to get close to see him.

"It was the first time I realized what kind of star he was," he remembers.

Camp said the new movie will stay true to the heart of the original Benji.

"Parents and grandparents will recognize the spirit of Benji," he said. "He was always a mutt and will always be a mutt. He is the everydog."

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Resumé

- Trainer Mark Forbes, who will be working on the new Benji film, has plenty of Hollywood animal experience.
- He's worked on 101 Dalmatians, Dr. Doolittle, Marley and Me, We Bought a Zoo, Mr. Popper's Penguins, Evan Almighty and Zookeeper.

This 1979 photo shows comedian Chevy Chase getting his ear licked from co-star Benji as the two held a news conference in Los Angeles announcing their movie Oh Heavenly Dog. NICK UT/THE ASSOCIATED PRESS FILE PHOTO

The bottle-smashing brawl at a New York nightclub between the crews and hangers-on of Drake and Chris Brown left one R&B singer with a nasty gash on his chin and boiling blood between the two. While they don't always end up in the ER, celebrity beefs certainly have a tendency to overcook. We take a look at some of the juiciest flaps of the last decade.

MIKE DOJC
scene@metronews.ca

5 Celebrity beefs

ALL PHOTOS GETTY IMAGES

Kanye West vs. Taylor Swift

At the 2009 MTV VMAs, when the country star won Best Female Video, Kanye snatched the microphone from her hands, rendering Taylor speechless and fans shell shocked. "I'm sorry, but Beyoncé had one of the best videos of all time," the rapper told the crowd. Amid a torrent of uniform condemnation, he diffused the situation by apologizing on Jay Leno's show. While any ill will from the stage-crashing debacle has long ago abated, the expression "pulling a Kanye" still remains in the popular lexicon.
Beef Rating: Skirt Steak

Noel Gallagher vs. Robbie Williams

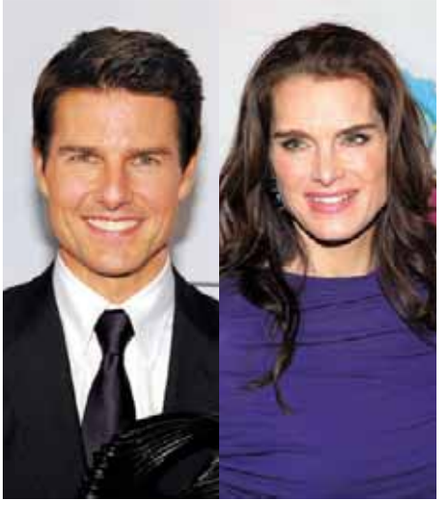
This gristly Britpop beef nearly charbroiled when the Oasis guitarist dumped on Williams in an interview calling him "the fat dancer from Take That." Williams lashed back at Gallagher, calling him a "mean-spirited dwarf" and following an Oasis album release mailed him a wreath with a note reading: "To Noel Gallagher, RIP. Heard your latest album — with deepest sympathy, Robbie Williams." The discourse of the digs has grown more civil in recent years. At a 2011 Take That concert at Wembley Stadium, Williams told the crowd that Noel could kiss his "perfectly formed backside."
Beef Rating: Brisket

Donald Trump vs. Rosie O'Donnell

This ongoing spat was sparked by comments Rosie made after Trump's decision to allow a Miss USA winner to keep her crown after allegations of underage drinking. In their epic battle of barbs he's been called a "snake-oil salesman" and a "pimp." Meanwhile, she's been labelled a "true loser" and "a terrible, disgusting human being." This past March after Rosie's Oprah Network talk show was cancelled, Trump told Fox and Friends: "Frankly, that was just going to happen. I knew it immediately when they announced it." He added, "Some moron will come and hire her again to do something else and that will fail. At some point, let her rest. Let her go away."
Beef Rating: Porterhouse

Stephen Baldwin vs. Kevin Costner

In late 2010 the Baldwin brother best known for his role in The Usual Suspects filed a lawsuit against Costner alleging that the Field of Dreams actor duped him out of millions. Baldwin, an early investor in Costner's Ocean Therapy Solutions, sold out just days before a contract to sell the company's oil spill cleaning equipment to BP was announced. It took a jury just two hours to find Baldwin's claim without merit.
Beef Rating: Tenderloin Roast



Tom Cruise vs. Brook Shields

In 2005 the earnest Mission Impossible star became the butt of thousands of jokes when he lambasted Brook Shields for taking prescription medication to treat postpartum depression. While explaining his controversial stance on the Today Show, he knocked psychiatry calling it a "pseudo science." Shields retaliated in a New York Times op-ed: "If any good can come of Mr. Cruise's ridiculous rant, let's hope that it gives much-needed attention to a serious disease," she wrote.
Beef Rating: Sloppy Joe

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HOLISTIC FITNESS: THREE OPTIONS: OPTION 1: $50 FOR A 4-DAY POWER HEALING CLEANSE (A $199.99 VALUE) | OPTION 2: $60 FOR A 7-DAY POWER HEALING CLEANSE (A $349.99 VALUE) | OPTION 3: $70 FOR AN 11-DAY POWER HEALING CLEANSE (A $399.99 VALUE) ALL INCLUDE SHIPPING, 30-DAY SUPPLY OF FAT-BURNING LEMONADE, STEP-BY-STEP GUIDE AND MORE

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